

*Spencer*

OFFICE WORK: CAREERS UNLIMITED \*

by  
The Honorable John Edward Fogarty  
Member of Congress from the Second District of Rhode Island

I am honored and pleased to be here today at your graduation from business school. It is heartening to know that so many young people today are putting emphasis on education beyond high school. The specialized, technical knowledge which you derive from the extra years put in beyond high school are extremely valuable to you as individuals. And they are valuable to us as a nation, for the strength of a nation is the sum of the competencies of each of its citizens.

For every year beyond high school that you spend in study, you may expect to earn an additional fifty thousand dollars during your lifetime. This is time well invested, indeed. And in terms of benefit to the nation, you have put yourselves, by your added skill and knowledge, among the ranks of the specialists.

Office education is defined as a program which prepares a person for an "office career". I like the use of the word "career". The office position today is a much different thing from the limited, simple function that it was in the pre-automation days.

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In this day and age few employers hire just a typist. The employer is looking for someone who, of course, can use the typewriter--an electric typewriter--but who can also use at least two or three of the other office machines which are standard equipment today.

When a business concern needs an accountant, it expects that the prospective employee will be versatile enough to be able to adapt his training to the specialized needs of the business. In other words, the employer today is looking for a future executive when he looks for an accountant.

And when he looks for an office manager he expects to find the kind of intelligent, foresighted person who will be able to devise procedure; one who will be flexible enough to modify and adapt his procedure to changing needs; one who will be attuned to the human problems as well as the professional problems that arise in any situation which embraces a group of people working together.

As I see it, an education for business work is highly demanding. It demands attention to detail and at the same time an appreciation of the overall program. It demands the ability to follow directions and yet the ability to retain one's individuality of approach to the job.

I wonder if office employees themselves always see their work as a real career? There are about 10 million people in this country who are engaged in office work.

This is the second largest employment category in the Nation. This fact alone should be enough to awe its members. And with such vast numbers, the normal percentage who are naturally the potential executives will produce numerous opportunities for advancement for all of you.

It is estimated that the worker of today produces 6 times as much as the worker of 100 years ago. If this rate of increase continues, the worker of the future will be able to produce in a few hours what now takes a week. In terms of business positions--office work--this spells automation to a fine degree.

But history has proven that automation, for the office worker, does not hold the threat of job loss - or loss of responsibility - that it holds for the unskilled and the uneducated worker. The greater the production, due to machines, the greater the load of office work requiring intelligent analysis and sound judgment. The field of office work will increase, rather than decline, in the wake of automation. Just take a look at the classified ads; There is a perpetual pool of unfilled office positions even when there is a scarcity of openings in other fields. According to U. S. Labor Department estimates, we will need 27 percent more office workers in 1970 than we need today!

This prospect invites speculation about the career opportunities in office work.

You graduates here today, having deliberately chosen office work as your field, presumably plan to make it your life career.

How many of you will rise to all the opportunities and possibilities that will confront you in the next ten years? And how many of you will, through lack of vision, confine yourselves to the limited area and range offered you as a beginner?

Some of the young ladies among you, I am sure, think of office work as a stop-gap until you get married. Fair enough. There are many office jobs, and always will be, that require the kind of person who is only partially committed. But to you young ladies, I would like to say this:

There's a fifty-fifty chance that you will be working again, after your children are in school. Referring again to Labor Department estimates, about half the women of this country between the ages of 35 and 55 will be working in 1970.

Therefore, use your job today to get ready for that job of the future. Build for a career--even though you may interrupt it. Let the job you get as a 1961 graduate of business school be a training ground for you, and not just a transient experience.

Familiarize yourself, in general, with the whole operation of your office, so that you know the relationship of your job to others in the scheme of things, and the purpose and function of each other job. If you can learn to visualize office work as a necessary and related function to the whole financial scheme of things, you will be a welcome addition to the ranks of office employees in years hence.

For you will be bringing the sense of continuity which is necessary to the successful functioning of an office.

This advice is, of course, not directed exclusively to the young ladies in this graduating class. It can be applied equally effectively to those areas of office work which appeal to men.

The future is almost unbounded for the office worker who is, first of all well-trained.--and I am sure you are--and, secondly, has the mental readiness for change. Adaptability. That is the secret word. If you have it, you can go places in this field you have chosen. Use your training, down to the last ounce. But one day some of the things you have learned will be outmoded. Then be ready to cast them off. Be on the look-out for signs of change. Read. Do not confine your interests to your office. Become acquainted with the whole field of economic endeavor which gives your office its reason for existing. Become executive-minded. This is the first requisite to becoming the executive.

Don't be afraid of change. But don't, on the other hand, accept change on anyone else's say-so. Find out for yourself why and to what degree you think there should be modifications in the old pattern. When you can offer constructive advice and criticism, then you are on your way. With the anticipated enormous increase in office positions during the next ten years, it follows that there will be a sizable number of new opportunities at the managerial level.

Be ready when the need appears for a new position and a new approach. One area you must study if you have enough drive and foresight to see yourself in a management position-- you must have a working familiarity with the theory and practice of economics. Understand the economy of this Nation and you will understand better the place your firm has in the overall scheme of things. Only by an appreciation of the democratic foundation of our capitalist system and by study of its complexities can you expect to play an active role in developing your part of it.

The business office is the connecting link between production and distribution. The way it is run can make or break a whole enterprise. And within the office, the way in which even one of the several jobs is done can make or break the business function. Sometimes the office procedure is wasteful, and could be streamlined. Sometimes, however, the wise manager sees that an initial extravagance can be the most effective, the most time-saving, the most economical. Running an office of my own, as I do in the Congress, I can say these things with first-hand knowledge. There can be such a thing as too much efficiency; it eliminates the human aspect of office work, and therefore reduces it to a rigid operation, unable to flex with new demands.

For example, they say that the weight of the paper that goes into the planning of a bomber is too heavy to be carried by the bomber. Now, maybe your first reaction is: Bureaucratic red tape!

On the other hand, think of it this way: If some part of that particular kind of paper work had been eliminated, perhaps the plane would never have gotten into the air.

There is a classic story in the business education field to illustrate the importance of the office procedure to the success of the business. It is the story of the collapse of a little "peanut" empire. The Government planned with care an enterprise which was to lead to economic self-sufficiency for a large area. Technical experts supervised the planting and cultivation; other experts sought out the markets for the nuts. Production and distribution were approached, in other words, on a planned basis.

Nature cooperated well. The harvest was abundant, the nuts were all harvested, packed, carted, stored, ready to be shipped to waiting markets. But then something went wrong. The paper work step failed. There was a complete breakdown between the processing and the distribution. The peanuts never moved because the papers never got pushed. The plantation planners had not seen the necessity for having experts to handle the business aspects of the business.

As a result, a whole region and its people failed to attain the self-sufficiency which is a prerequisite for successful self-government.

This story illustrates the too-common attitude about office work: that it is routine and incidental to the financial enterprise it services. This attitude prevails chiefly among those people who have never been in the business of making money; and also among a certain element of young people who look forward to "office jobs" because they are supposedly easy, undemanding, carefree.

I spoke earlier of changes that are taking place in our society, in our way of life, which are reflected in changes in the quality and nature of the business office. I am sharply aware of this era of change. As Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee responsible for matters concerning labor and welfare, I hear much testimony from experts in the United States Departments of Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare. Their evidence universally attests to change--change in the direction of greater complexity, greater mobility, greater uncertainty--and, at the same time, greater opportunity. Without exception we are warned that the future holds wonderful possibilities, provided we are prepared for them.

This preparedness is what I wish to emphasize to you business graduates here today.



The great prospects for major advancement in our economy generally are inhibited and delayed because of lack of enough trained manpower. And by trained, I mean educated in the techniques of your field, but educated also to think beyond the teachings you have been taught: in other words, you must be able to interpret, modify and adapt, when the situation calls for something beyond the established pattern of operation.

The office makes and keeps the records upon which management makes its decisions. It helps management to coordinate and predict. It provides the data upon which management can make its educated guesses regarding the future.

The office, in this sense, is the heart of the business. If you think of your field in this way, you will be bringing to it the creativity which it needs and the stability which it would otherwise lack.

I hope I have helped create for you a saleable image of the scope of your future work. If so, you will take on your job interview a saleable image of yourselves.